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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 000191

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR ZSYED; LONDON FOR CPALMER

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TAGS: PREL PGOV BF TK UK

SUBJECT: GOING, GOING, NOT YET GONE -- TURKS AND CAICOS  
PREMIER RESIGNS, SEEKS BAHAMAS, CARICOM SUPPORT

REF: NASSAU 169

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Timothy Zuniga-Brown for reasons  
1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The embattled premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), Michael Misick, resigned March 23 in favor of his successor as party leader, Galmo Williams. The move came after he and a small delegation, including Williams, visited Nassau March 20 and met with government and opposition leaders. The bid for Bahamian support followed a March 16 announcement of the UK's planned partial suspension of the TCI constitution (reftel). Williams appealed to the Bahamian public to speak out against the "unfair" British move, and at least one religious leader issued a statement calling for support for the people of TCI in their democratic aspirations. The GCOB did not comment on the visit or the talks.

¶2. (C) The opposition Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) has adopted a wait-and-see attitude, after initially giving Misick's delegation a sympathetic hearing according to a party source. PLP leaders traveled to TCI March 22 in a show of support to consult with politicians there. The PLP has not issued any statements on the meetings, but ex-Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell implicitly criticized the "drastic" British move to curtail democracy as soon as it was announced. Noting that TCI is a member of CARICOM and the Commonwealth (through the UK), he said that the suspension of the constitution was antithetical to the Commonwealth's Harare principles of respect for democracy and human rights and the CARICOM civil society charter. Mitchell backtracked after visiting TCI, telling Nassau media the opposition there was also concerned about systemic government corruption.

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COMMENT  
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¶3. (C) Mitchell told Charge that the PLP was favoring taking a stand in support of TCI home rule, but quickly added that the trick was to avoid being seen as condoning the massive corruption that Misick's government is alleged to have committed. The GCOB is unlikely to support Misick against the UK absent an unlikely groundswell of support for Misick among the Bahamian public or unless pushed into joining any "CARICOM consensus" which may yet emerge.

ZUNIGA-BROWN